

## CLAIMS

- 1 1. A communication interface between an accounting application and a printer agent ap-  
2 plication executing on a computer network, the interface comprising:  
3 application programming interface (API) functions exchanged between the appli-  
4 cations that provide accounting support for print services directed to a print job received  
5 by the printer agent, the accounting support services including tracking production of the  
6 print job and computer network resources consumed by the job, the API functions com-  
7 prising a first print service API that is called by the printer agent before the print job is  
8 created and that enables the accounting application to one of reject the print job, accept  
9 the print job and instruct the printer agent to place an accounting hold on the print job.
- 1 2. The communication interface of Claim 1 wherein the API functions further comprise a  
2 second print service API that is called by the printer agent after the print job is created  
3 and before the job is scheduled for processing, the second print service API including (i)  
4 a job identifier for use by the accounting application to evaluate and act upon attributes of  
5 the job and (ii) a file path to a document data file associated with the job.
- 1 3. The communication interface of Claim 2 wherein the API functions further comprise a  
2 third print service API that is called by the printer agent when processing of the print job  
3 is complete, the third print service API including the job identifier and the file path to the  
4 document data file associated with the job, the file path used by the accounting applica-  
5 tion to evaluate the completed job and perform accounting operations.
- 1 4. The communication interface of Claim 3 wherein the accounting application and  
2 printer agent execute on a print server of the computer network, and wherein the API  
3 functions facilitate computing of charges by the accounting application for print services  
4 and materials used by a print client of the computer network.

1 5. A method for communicating between applications executing on a computer network,  
2 the method comprising the steps of:

3 providing an accounting application configured to run on a first device coupled to  
4 the network;

5 providing a printer agent application configured to run on a second device cou-  
6 pled to the network, the printer agent representing a printer on the network and contain-  
7 ing information about the printer; and

8 exchanging application programming interface (API) function calls between the  
9 applications that provide accounting support for print services relating to a print job re-  
10 ceived by the printer agent and directed to the printer, the accounting support services  
11 including tracking production of the print job and resources consumed by the job.

1 6. The method of Claim 5 wherein the first device is a computer and the second device is  
2 the printer, and wherein information contained in the printer agent comprises a network  
3 address of the printer and a status of the printer.

1 7. The method of Claim 5 wherein the step of exchanging comprises the step of calling a  
2 first print service API at the printer agent before the print job is created, the first print  
3 service API enabling the accounting application to one of reject the print job, accept the  
4 print job and instruct the printer agent to place an accounting hold on the print job.

1 8. The method of Claim 7 wherein the step of exchanging further comprises the step of  
2 calling a second print service API at the printer agent after the print job is created and  
3 before the job is scheduled for processing, the second print service API including (i) a job  
4 identifier for use by the accounting application to evaluate and act upon attributes of the  
5 job and (ii) a file path to a document data file associated with the job.

1 9. The method of Claim 8 wherein the step of exchanging further comprises the step of  
2 calling a third print service API at the printer agent when processing of the print job is  
3 complete, the third print service API including the job identifier and the file path to the

4 document data file associated with the job, the file path used by the accounting applica-  
5 tion to evaluate the completed job and perform accounting operations.

1 10. The method of Claim 9 further comprising the step of registering the accounting ap-  
2 plication with the printer agent to provide the printer agent with addresses for the API  
3 print service calls.

1 11. The method of Claim 10 further comprising the steps of, wherein the first and second  
2 devices comprise a single print server:

3 submitting the print job from a print client on the network to the printer agent;  
4 obtaining information about the print job at the accounting application using the  
5 API function calls; and

6 using the obtained information to leverage functions directed to acquiring and  
7 setting attributes for the print job, thereby extending the utility of the attribute functions  
8 for the accounting application.

1 12. A computer readable medium containing executable program instructions for com-  
2 municating between applications executing on a computer of a network, the executable  
3 program instructions comprising program instructions for:

4 configuring an accounting application to run on the computer;

5 configuring a printer agent application to run on the computer, the printer agent  
6 representing a printer on the network and containing information about the printer; and

7 exchanging application programming interface (API) function calls between the  
8 applications that provide accounting support for print services relating to a print job re-  
9 ceived by the printer agent and directed to the printer, the accounting support services  
10 including tracking production of the print job and computer resources consumed by the  
11 job.

1 13. The computer readable medium of Claim 12 wherein the program instruction for ex-  
2 changing comprises the program instruction for calling a first print service API at the

3 printer agent before the print job is created, the first print service API enabling the ac-  
4 counting application to one of reject the print job, accept the print job and instruct the  
5 printer agent to place an accounting hold on the print job.

1 14. The computer readable medium of Claim 13 wherein the program instruction for ex-  
2 changing further comprises the program instruction for calling a second print service API  
3 at the printer agent after the print job is created and before the job is scheduled for proc-  
4 essing, the second print service API including (i) a job identifier for use by the account-  
5 ing application to evaluate and act upon attributes of the job and (ii) a file path to a  
6 document data file associated with the job.

1 15. The computer readable medium of Claim 14 wherein the program instruction for ex-  
2 changing further comprises the program instruction for calling a third print service API at  
3 the printer agent when processing of the print job is complete, the third print service API  
4 including the job identifier and the file path to the document data file associated with the  
5 job, the file path used by the accounting application to evaluate the completed job and  
6 perform accounting operations.

1 16. The computer readable medium of Claim 15 further comprising the program instruc-  
2 tion for registering the accounting application with the printer agent to provide the printer  
3 agent with addresses for the API print service calls.

1 17. The computer readable medium of Claim 16 further comprising program instructions  
2 for, wherein the computer is a print server:

3 submitting the print job from a print client on the network to the printer agent;  
4 obtaining information about the print job at the accounting application using the  
5 API function calls; and  
6 using the obtained information to leverage functions directed to acquiring and  
7 setting attributes for the print job, thereby extending the utility of the attribute functions  
8 for the accounting application.